

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. An interface circuit for process connections to computers, the interface circuit comprising:

at least one bidirectional input connection;

at least one bidirectional output connection, which is connected to a logic circuit;

a plurality of switches, which can be controlled by signals, whose inputs are connected directly or indirectly to at least one input connection;

several multiplexers which can be controlled by signals;

at least one analog comparator; and

at least one digital/analog converter;

wherein according to the state of one or more of the signals which control the switches and multiplexers the components are activated, deactivated, or changeable into different operating or switching states, with different analog or digital functions being assignable to the one or more bidirectional input connections.

2. The interface circuit of claim 1 wherein the one or more bidirectional output connections are connected over a decoupling device to the logic circuit.

3. The interface circuit of claim 1 wherein the multiplexers can be operated bidirectionally, i.e., as multiplexers and as demultiplexers.

4. The interface circuit of claim 2 wherein the multiplexers can be operated bidirectionally, i.e., as multiplexers and as demultiplexers.

5. The interface circuit of claim 1 wherein the one or more analog comparators are associated with a sample-and-hold circuit, whose input is connected to at least one input connection.

6. The interface circuit of claim 5 wherein the one or more analog/digital converters operate according to the principle of successive approximation.

7. The interface circuit of claim 1 wherein between the one or more input connections and one or more analog comparators, a current/voltage converter is connected, with the connection being switchable by the multiplexer.

8. The interface circuit of claim 1 wherein one or more of the analog comparators are connected after the controllable hysteresis circuit.

9. The interface circuit of claim 1 wherein a digital/analog converter is connected in the signal direction from the output connection to one or more input connections, with the connection being switchable in a controlled way by the multiplexer.

10. The interface circuit of claim 1 wherein at least two input connections are connected to each other over a measurement resistor and a controllable switch, with both connections of the measurement resistor being connected to a differential amplifier, whose output is connected to one or more analog/digital converters.

11. The interface circuit of claim 1 wherein several interface circuits are connected in a cascade arrangement and connected to the logic circuit.

12. The interface circuit of claim 2 wherein several interface circuits are connected in a cascade arrangement and connected to the logic circuit.

13. The interface circuit of claim 9 wherein several interface circuits are connected in a cascade arrangement and connected to the logic circuit.

14. The interface circuit of claim 1 wherein a decoupling device is connected between the interface circuit and the logic circuit.

15. The interface circuit of claim 1 wherein an optocoupler is connected between the interface circuit and the logic circuit.

16. The interface circuit of claim 1 wherein higher functions are implemented in the logic circuit, while only lower functions are implemented in the interface circuit.

17. The interface circuit of claim 16 wherein the higher functions comprise system functions.

18. The interface circuit of claim 16 wherein the logic circuit and the interface circuit are configured such that bidirectional serial communication takes place between these circuits.

19. The interface circuit of claim 17 wherein the logic circuit and the interface circuit are configured such that bidirectional serial communication takes place between these circuits.